DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 461 353 IR 018 187

AUTHOR Reed, Craig
TITLE The Morning "Kiddie" Block. Info. P@ckets No. 3.
INSTITUTION Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 1994-08-00
NOTE 6p.
AVAILABLE FROM Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 901 E. Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20004-2037. Tel: 202-879-9675; Fax: 202-783-1019.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Childhood Needs; *Childrens Television; *Educational Television; Graphs; *Programming (Broadcast); *Public Television; *Scheduling; Strategic Planning; Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS *Public Broadcasting Service

ABSTRACT

Scheduling the morning "kiddie" block has become an important issue since PBS's (Public Broadcasting Service) 1990-91 children's initiative. Adding to the mix of children's programs is the upcoming "PTV, The Ready to Learn Channel on PBS." This services promises more children's titles as well as more hours of material for stations to manage. Ten model stations will be airing one of its two different schedules during the start-up period. Stations that are not airing "PTV" are faced with putting all the pieces of this puzzle together properly to provide service to small children. This report addresses this issue by examining weekday morning schedules and associated ratings on 6 selected stations during November 1993 and offers guidelines on putting together the morning schedule. Some best-case examples of what can be accomplished using sound scheduling strategies are looked at. Then, less successful strategies are discussed in order to show what should be avoided. Graphs show various station schedules, kid 2-5 ratings, and kid 2-5 PUTs (persons using television) across the Monday through Friday morning block. The graphs basically provide a visual representation of kids' shares across time. (AEF)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

info. p@ckets

ED 461 353

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

August 1994
No. 3

The Morning "Kiddie" Block.

By Craig Reed

Scheduling the morning "kiddie" block has become an important issue since PBS's 1990-91 children's initiative. The increased number of children's programs available and the popularity of *Barney & Friends* has transformed the morning block into a true jigsaw puzzle. Added to the mix is the upcoming "PTV, The Ready to Learn Channel on PBS." This service promises more children's titles as well as more hours of material for stations to manage. Ten model site stations will be airing one of its two different schedules during the start-up period.

Stations that are not airing PTV, The Ready to Learn Channel are faced with putting all the pieces of this puzzle together properly to provide service to one of public television's largest clienteles, small children.

We've addressed this issue by looking at weekday morning schedules and their associated ratings on selected stations during November 1993. The graphs show various station schedules, kid 2-5 ratings, and kid 2-5 PUTs (persons using television) across the Monday-Friday morning block. The graphs basically provide a visual representation of kids' shares across time. We've looked at enough of these graphs to offer some guidelines on putting together the morning schedule. If all the input from state legislators, general managers, and nieces and nephews were put aside, here's what should be done:

1. Lead with *Barney & Friends* after kid 2-5 PUTs are high—in most markets this means 8:30 or 9:00.

2. Follow *Barney & Friends* with a block of strong programs: *Sesame Street, Shining Time Station, Lamb Chop,* and *Mr. Rogers* (best in that order).

3. Avoid hammocking, i.e., placing weaker programs or programs aimed at older kids in between stronger programs.

4. Play *Barney & Friends* at least one-half hour after the end of any early morning hits on the commercial stations. Right now, *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* is the hot property. It plays at at 7:00 or 7:30 in most markets.

5. By the same token, avoid competing directly with the early morning commercial fare. The best time for our children's programs appears to be between the hours of 9:00 and noon—a time when the commercial guys turn to adult ori-

Intelligence
that you can use
on communications
media & technologies

Corporation for
Public Broadcasting

901 E. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20004-2037
USA

Editorial
Janice Jones
Tel: 1 202 879 9677
Fax 1 202 783 1019
E-mail: jones@soul.cpb.org

Subscriptions (free)
Back & additional copies
Renee Davis
Tel: 1 202 879 9675
Fax 1 202 783 1019
E-mail: rdavis@soul.cpb.org

IR018187

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Jones
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ented material. The strong children's shows, or at least repeats of them, should be saved for that time.

6. Be sure that the time devoted to children's shows after 9:00 am is sufficient to reap the full benefit that those programs have to offer. Since 9:00 to noon is the best time for these shows and little else seems to work there, that entire time period should be freed up for kids' programming.

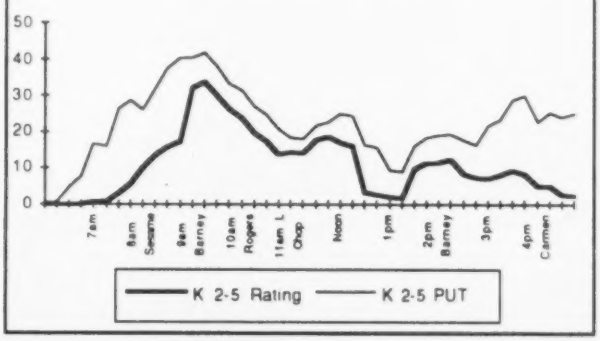
7. If there is a second public television station in the market that plays *Barney & Friends* before 9:00, air *Barney & Friends* after the second station.

The discussion that follows walks through several stations' schedules, showing why we came to these conclusions.

We'll start out looking at some best-case examples of what can be accomplished, using sound scheduling strategies. Then, we'll turn to some less successful strategies to show what should be avoided.

KETC. Figure 1 shows the St. Louis station's schedule. When reading the graph, note that the thin line is the PUT level, which represents the ceiling for a station's kids ratings. The thick line is the station in question's ratings for kids 2-5 — in this case it's KETC. When the difference between these two lines is small, the station has a very high share. When the difference is large, the shares are relatively low.

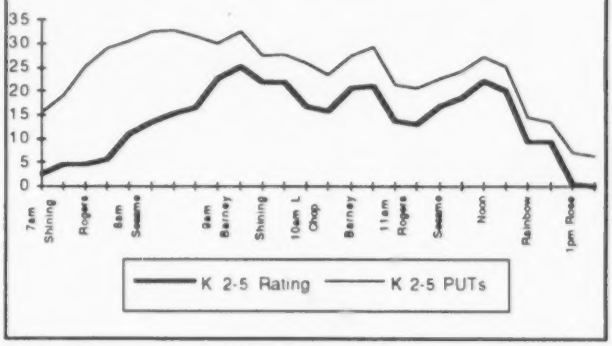
Figure 1: KETC Kids 2-5 Ratings and PUTs - Nov '93



KETC follows a good number of the guidelines and their numbers show it. They wait until after the commercial competition dies down to play *Barney* and then they follow with a fairly strong and lengthy block of programs. In doing so, they maintain their share of kids 2-5 throughout the morning.

There is another important point about the graph. The disparity between PUT levels and kids 2-5 ratings before 9:00 was caused by the competition. The commercial guys are playing such fare as *Power Rangers, Conan*, and *Duck Tales* at this time. So, KETC can't generate the kind of numbers in the early morning that they can after 9:00. Most of the commercial kids shows are aimed at older kids, but as the PUT levels demonstrate, they also attract a good number of the younger ones.

Figure 2: KTCA Kids 2-5 Ratings and PUTs - Nov '93



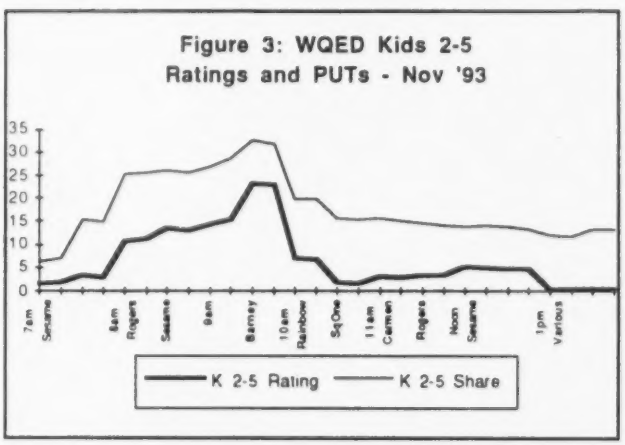
KTCA. Minneapolis' morning block is another example of good scheduling (Figure 2). They play *Barney & Friends* at 9:00, follow it with a strong block until 12:30 and, therefore, maintain their kids' shares for the entire morning.

Note that they resist placing *Reading Rainbow* in the middle of their young kids block. When they do play the program at 12:30, their ratings as well as PUT levels drop off immediately. If they had placed that program in the middle of the block, it probably would have had the same effect on their ratings. And, the young kids might not have come back to see the remainder of the block.

Another interesting side note here is that *Barney & Friends* is actually driving PUT levels. Each time *Barney & Friends* comes on, PUTs spike upward, meaning that kids are turning on the TV in large numbers just to see the purple puff ball. This kind of phenomenon probably hasn't happened before in the history of public television.

St. Louis and Minneapolis represent the most impressive schedules we could find. By and large most other stations do not see these kinds of results, even when they use proper strategies. Following are a few less successful station schedules, which show what happens when our guidelines are not followed.

WQED. The schedule on Pittsburgh's WQED is an example of what can happen when weaker



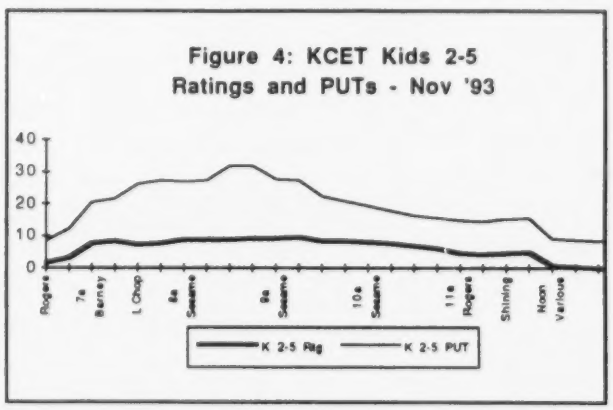
programs are placed between strong ones (Figure 3). WQED has the right idea by playing *Barney & Friends* fairly early in the block (9:30). In doing this, they see results much like the previous stations—very high shares for kids 2-5.

However, immediately following *Barney & Friends* is an older-oriented block containing *Reading Rainbow*, *Square One* and *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?*. When this happens, the young kids go away (many even turn off the set, heaven forbid) and they do not return to see *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street* later in the morning. The audience would be much better served if WQED would play *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and *Sesame Street* right after *Barney & Friends*, and slide the older shows to later in the morning.

Although this is an extreme case, it does illustrate why hammocking kids shows is a bad idea. By hammocking, the station risks losing an audience that will not return later.

KCET. This station's block is an example of what happens when the strongest programs are scheduled directly against the commercial competition (Figure 4). KCET brings out its heaviest hitter too early in the line-up—playing *Barney & Friends* at 7:00—when two other independents also are competing for the kids audience. KCET does win the 2-5 share war, but the independents hurt *Barney & Friends*' ratings considerably.

A 9:00 start for *Barney & Friends* would leave only one other station competing for the kids

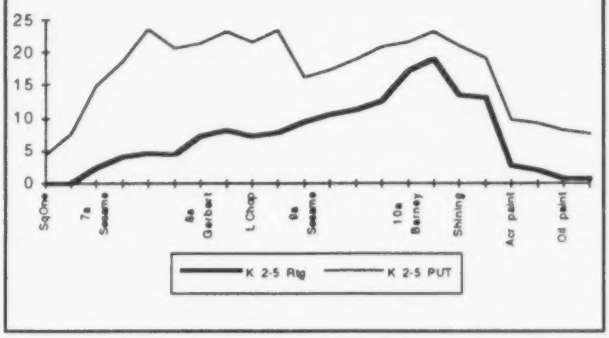


BEST COPY AVAILABLE

audience. (That other station is currently doing well with their 9:00 program, *Xula*, but we also know that *Barney & Friends* is massacring *Xula* in Minneapolis at 9:00.) So, by moving *Barney & Friends* to 9:00, KCET would probably bring the kids in to watch and then keep them there for the rest of the morning.

KERA. Here is an example of scheduling *Barney & Friends* too late in the block as well as not having a long enough block (Figure 5). KERA waits until 10:00 to air *Barney & Friends*. Before that time their kids 2-5 shares are respectable, but not what they could be. When *Barney & Friends* comes on, KERA shares shoot up, and for the most part, they remain high for the next program, *Shining Time Station*. At 11:00, KERA

Figure 5: KERA Kids 2-5 Ratings and PUTs - Nov '93

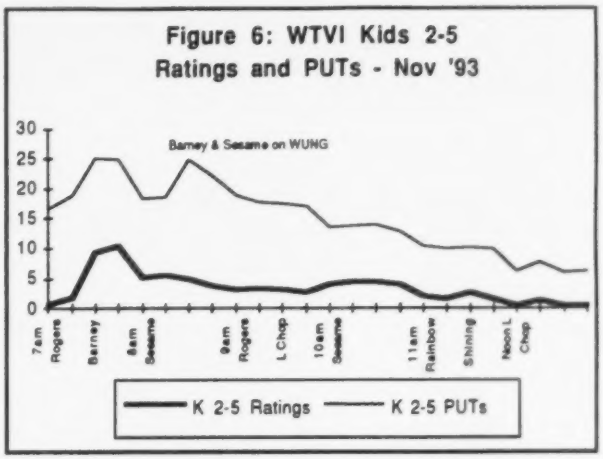


begins adult programming and their kids' ratings, as well as PUTs, tumble.

If KERA would move *Barney & Friends* to 9:00 and extend their kids block to at least noon, they would likely maintain high kids shares over that entire time period.

WTVI. Charlotte's primary station shows what can happen when a second station plays *Barney & Friends* later in the morning (Figure 6). WTVI airs *Barney & Friends* at 7:30 and earns respectable numbers with the program. However, immediately after *Barney & Friends*, the audience leaves and does not return. Probably, at least part of the problem is caused by the second station, WUNG, playing *Barney & Friends* at 8:30 and *Sesame* at 9:00. WUNG, basically, steals the audience.

Figure 6: WTVI Kids 2-5 Ratings and PUTs - Nov '93



This graph also shows another example of hammocking. At 11:00, *Reading Rainbow* is hammocked between *Sesame Street* and *Shining Time Station*. This hammocking appears to hurt *Shining Time Station's* ratings—*Sesame Street* gathers about a 30 share and *Shining Time Station* earns only about a 20 after *Reading Rainbow* airs.

These six station schedules provide clear directions for scheduling a children's morning block. The wild card in all of this is **PTV, The Ready to Learn Channel on PBS**. As mentioned above, ten model site stations will be airing one of its two different schedules. As an example, we show on the next page the schedule that PBS has dubbed "Channel #1".

This schedule follows some of the most important guidelines discussed in this paper. On the positive side, the schedule follows *Barney & Friends* with blocks of fairly strong programs. In addition, kids' PUTs should be fairly high for *Barney & Friends'* first play at 8:00 a.m. On the

PTV, The Ready to Learn Channel

Eastern Time	
7:00	*Sesame Street*
8:00	*Barney & Friends*
8:30	*Shining Time Station*
9:00	*Lamb Chop's Play-Along*
9:30	*Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*
10:00	*Barney & Friends*
10:30	*Storytime*
11:00	*Sesame Street*
Noon	*Local Option*
14:00	*Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*
14:30	*Barney & Friends*
15:00	*Sesame Street*
16:00	*Reading Rainbow*
16:30	*Ghostwriter*
17:00	*Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?*
17:30	*Bill Nye the Science Guy*

cautionary side, there are a couple of weaker programs that have been hammocked after 9:00 a.m.., and depending on the market, *Barney & Friends'* 8:00 a.m. play could run into stiff commercial competition.

Taken as a whole, however, this schedule is a great improvement over the potpourri of instructional television, children's shows, and how-tos that some stations currently broadcast. After all, this schedule was designed by committee, and considering that, it turned out very well!

Craig Reed is Director of Research at Pacific Mountain Network TV Ratings Analysis Consortium (PMN TRAC) in Tucson.

CPB funded this report. Opinions expressed are the author's and do not necessarily reflect opinions or policies of the Corporation.